

ACTON COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES  
TOWN HALL, 472 MAIN STREET  
ACTON, MA 01720

February 26, 2014

Acton Community Preservation Committee  
Town Hall, 472 Main St.  
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Community Preservation Committee,

We are writing in support of the Acton Arboretum's Bog Boardwalk proposal in which access to the bog area of the Arboretum would be provided via a walkway.

Acton strives to be an inclusive community. However at present, a significant and beautiful area of the Arboretum is off limits to individuals with mobility challenges. This creates an unequal situation in which tax paying residents with disabilities are not able to avail themselves of the same benefits as other Acton residents. This is not our vision for Acton.

The Bog Boardwalk project remedies the current unequal situation. The proposed walkway has a 5% grade and can be easily utilized from the Minot Avenue sidewalk by an individual who uses a wheelchair or has difficulty manipulating stairs. There are two curb cuts on Minot Avenue near the entrance to the walkway which will allow all individuals to park near the entrance and access the site. The proposed bog boardwalk provides for wheelchair turnaround points. Because of all these attributes, the accessible walkway and boardwalk would finally allow for adults and children who use a wheelchair or have other mobility challenges to fully experience the unique environment of our bog.

Presently, both entrances to the bog area are inaccessible for individuals with mobility challenges. For individuals who use wheelchairs, there is no access from Minot Avenue-- only a stairway. The path from the main Taylor Rd. entrance cannot be made accessible because of a natural land formation called an esker. If in the future the Minot Avenue staircase needs repair, we have been advised by the Acton Building Department that 521 CMR 3.3.1, Note A requires the installation of an accessible ramp or walk, otherwise the stairway would be prohibited from use, making it more difficult for everyone to get to the Arboretum from Minot Avenue. Building the Bog Boardwalk and walkway now precludes this from occurring.

As you know, the Community Preservation Act requires the Acton CPC to study Acton's "needs, possibilities and resources." Our commission has studied the needs of individuals with disabilities in Acton. In our last town wide survey in 2010 in which 413 individuals responded, 35% stated that access in Acton is either a concern or a problem. We believe that part of the CPC's role in meeting Acton's needs is to enable providing access for all—not just some—of our citizens. Further, Acton 2020 goal 5.4 states that Acton is to "support citizens with

disabilities in participating fully in the life of the community.” Right now, this is clearly an unmet goal, but approval of the Bog Boardwalk project and walkway would be a significant step towards the meeting of this goal.

Right now, a child who uses a wheelchair would not be able to accompany her classmates on a class trip to the bog, because the area is inaccessible. This is a preventable deficiency in our town. We need to be more inclusive. We ask that the Bog Boardwalk project be approved, so we can honestly-- and with pride-- say that Acton is a place where nobody is left out and everyone matters.

Sincerely,

Lisa Franklin  
Co-Chair  
Acton Commission on Disabilities

Madeleine Harvey  
Co-Chair  
Acton Commission on Disabilities

cc: Bettina Abe, Natural Resources Assistant, Town of Acton  
Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director, Town of Acton  
Mark Barbadoro, Building Inspector, Town of Acton  
Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director, Town of Acton  
Cathy Hatfield, President, Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc.